

# THE LEISURE HOUR.

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THE MARRIAGE LICENCE NOT FORTHCOMING.

## A WREATH OF SMOKE.

### CHAPTER I.

MY first visit to London—well do I remember it, for well calculated were the circumstances under which it was made to fix it indelibly in my mind.

No. 295, 1857.

It had long been my ardent wish to visit the mighty city, which I had associated with everything beautiful, grand, and intellectual—which I had imagined to be a kind of Crystal Palace (only formed of a different material), in which

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must be gathered together all the riches and curiosities of the world.

I was one of thirteen children, the daughter of a retired officer residing in the north of Essex, and my readers will easily divine what prudential reasons deferred my visit to the metropolis. At length an inducement was offered beyond the power of a young lady of eighteen to withstand. I was asked to be bridesmaid to my cousin Maria Vincent, whose marriage was to take place from her father's house in London. My indulgent parents could not deny me a pleasure so great as that which was now proposed; and for the next fortnight, in our humble but cheerful home, the expected visit was the constant theme of our conversation, and preparations for it the perpetual occupation of our fingers; for though my uncle, with considerate generosity, had insisted on presenting me with my bridesmaid's attire, my scanty wardrobe had been in all respects unsuited for a visit to my rich relations in London.

As it was thought necessary to provide me with an escort, while yet expense was as much as possible to be avoided, I availed myself of the company of a farmer's wife, who was going to see her friends in London. For her convenience my journey was put off till the very day appointed for the wedding; but for my convenience she consented to depart by the very earliest train. I therefore found myself by her side, in a second-class carriage, on a cold misty morning in November, in vain attempting to warm my shivering frame by drawing my cloak close and closer around me, with a numbness in my hands and feet symptomatic of the process of freezing.

I was, however, in high spirits, and not disposed to grumble at anything. I need not describe my journey, nor relate how learned I became in the price of potatoes, and the advantage of keeping poultry. Of the scenery through which we passed, I can say nothing, as I had no opportunity of seeing it; for the sun had not risen when I set out on my travels (indeed, for aught that I beheld of him, he never rose during the whole day); and the windows of our carriage, which soon appeared like frosted glass, effectually shut out the view. At length we arrived in London, and my companion procured for me a cab, in which I, my trunk, bandbox, and umbrella, were safely placed, though not till I had almost become an icicle, by waiting at the railway terminus.

I was, then, fairly in London—what joy! And doubtless London was a splendid place, if I could but have managed to see it. But, alas! I was sensible of little but a smoky smell, a very thick atmosphere choking my lungs, a very rough vehicle jolting over the stones with a rattling noise which suggested headache, and a dim vision of what appeared to be houses, though I could scarcely distinguish their windows, all enveloped in a yellowish veil, by no means ornamental, I thought. The jolting continued so long, that I began to have serious apprehensions. Surely I ought to have arrived in Harley Street long ere now. Had the cabman missed his way in the fog? or was he wilfully driving me round and round in the labyrinth of streets, in order to exact an exorbitant fare? Thrice I let down the front glass, at the imminent peril of breaking it, to ask

if he were sure of his road, and as often received the reply, "All right!" uttered each time in a gruffer tone. I felt nervously afraid of being late. Of course I did not possess a watch; and I have seldom felt more relieved than I did when at length I was landed safe at the door of my uncle's house.

I was welcomed by my relatives in the hall. "Dear, I'm so glad to see you! but how cold you are! You will find your bonnet and dress all ready in your room. You must be dying of hunger. Did you ever see such a day for a wedding? We were taking breakfast in papa's study. I think you'll like the pink mantle and lace. A cup of hot coffee and muffins. Dear, dear! if you had never found the house in the fog!"

Such were the incoherent expressions, mingled with affectionate salutations, and uttered with a volubility which almost took away my breath, with which I was received by my cousin Lilly, the bridesmaid.

"Never mind the fare; we'll see after that. Thomas shall take your boxes up-stairs," said my uncle.

"The first thing is a little fire and a little food," cried Lilly, as the bright, merry-eyed little lady drew me with her into the study. And there, while I am warming my cold feet at the cheerful blaze, and partaking of the comfortable repast, I will just give my readers a slight sketch of Dr. Vincent and his family.

My uncle is a physician of repute; quiet and a little reserved in his manner, but with a twinkle lurking about the corners of his eyes, which betrays an ability both to relish a joke and to make one. He has a high, bald forehead, and scanty grizzled hair, but with very little else in his appearance to denote advancing years. He looked this morning a little graver than usual, perhaps from some hidden emotion of pain at parting with his eldest daughter.

His son Walter is studying in order to enter the medical profession. His usual expression of countenance is so solemn, that it might befit a judge or an undertaker, and I have sometimes thought that his very look would frighten his patients to death; but he has a merry spirit, notwithstanding his sober air—a hidden wit and humour, which perhaps sparkle all the better when they unexpectedly flash out, for being set upon so gloomy a background.

Lilly is one whom you cannot see without being somehow reminded of a humming-bird; she is all life, animation, energy; I can scarcely imagine that those sparkling black eyes are ever closed, or that she really can take rest in sleep.

I was now very impatient to see the bride, already occupied with her toilette, to say nothing of the preparations for my own. Lilly was my guide up-stairs, chatting merrily all the way, fluttering from subject to subject, but concluding every period with the exclamation, "To think of being married in such a fog!"

"One could have wished that the wedding-day had been fixed for to-morrow," said I.

"Oh, impossible!" exclaimed Lilly, lowering her voice; "we thought of that day at first, but it was very awkward. The bridegroom, Mr. Fane—he is a widower, you know—had a great, an

insuperable objection. To-morrow will be the anniversary of the death of his first wife."

"Oh! then of course he could not be married on that day," exclaimed I.

Maria, the fair bride, received me with kindness; but there was a half-bewildered, dreamy look about her, which gave me an idea that she had caught the infection of the fog. She was taller, some thought handsomer, than Lilly, but with far less animation and life. Slow in her movements, shy, almost to awkwardness, in her manner, she seemed rather to submit with the patience of a victim to the necessary preparations for her own adornment, than to take any interest in them.

Lilly now hurried me off to my own room. "You must be quick in your toilette," she observed; "the wedding takes place at eleven."

"Do you expect many friends?" I inquired.

"Oh! a great many; but they all meet at the church (that is, if they can manage to grope their way there), and come here afterwards for the wedding breakfast. Walter is going to walk over early to receive them in the vestry. Papa, the bride, and the bridesmaids follow together."

"And the bridegroom, Mr. Fane?"

"Oh! of course he also awaits us at the church. I hope he won't lose his way in the fog. Really, it grows darker and darker. Let me light your candles for you; without them you could not see your own face in the glass."

"Do you like him—I mean your new brother?" said I.

"Oh yes; he is a dear, kind creature as ever lived—just the husband to suit Maria, who would not have liked any one too much 'go a-head.' But I must leave you, Nelly; I have a thousand things to look after. I must see if the ice has come, and if the bouquets are rightly placed (one has a poor choice of flowers in November), and if the candelabra are all ready to be lighted; for they will be indispensable upon such a day as this. Just peep into the dining-room when you are ready, and say if the breakfast is not superb."

As soon as I had exchanged straw bonnet and warm cloak for fluttering muslin and rustling silk—losing in comfort almost as much as I gained in elegance—I descended into the room prepared for the guests. I surveyed with admiration the long tables, decked with flowers and glittering with plate, loaded with every delicacy in season and out of season, of which the central attraction was an enormous cake, which seemed formed, ornaments and all, of shining snow.

As I was examining a display of wealth so new to me, I heard the light quick step of Lilly, who was fluttering here, there, and everywhere through the house.

"Oh Nelly!" she exclaimed as she entered, "we are in such a dilemma."

"Some accident?" I inquired, in alarm.

"No, no; but as Maria was putting on her white satin shoe, what should it do but burst all down the side; it is quite impossible that she should wear it; we must send for another pair instant!" and she rang the dining-room bell with violence, and in half a minute, before it could be answered, rang it again.

"Has she not another—"

"No, none but black, and she could not go to

church in them, nor in one black and one white," she added, laughing. "As for mine, she could never draw them on. Oh, dear, dear! and it's getting so late, too! Poor dear Maria is always behind time."

The servant now entered, and was speedily despatched for the shoes, while Lilly, the very personification of impatience, watched at the window for his return.

"They ought to light all the street lamps; though, if they did, we should not be able to see them. Do you hear the people shouting to each other in the fog? There! just look at those two red lights, like staring eyes; I dare say they belong to the carriage of some guest, just on the way to the church. Oh! to think of being married on such a day!"

"Lilly, my dear," said the quiet voice of my uncle, "it is almost time now to start."

"The shoes! the shoes! will the boy never come back? Perhaps he has not been able to find the shop; perhaps some vehicle has run over him; perhaps—oh! dear, dear! there is the carriage already. Well, it must wait. Nelly, just come, and let us give out the white favours."

Dr. Vincent paced up and down the dining-room, looked out into the fog, consulted his watch, and ever and anon his voice was heard at the bottom of the stairs: "Young ladies, it is late; we ought to be at the church."

At last the shoes arrived, and then there was the trying on. Never had shoes seemed so resolved not to fit. Maria could never do anything in a hurry, and Lilly was in a fever of impatience, which every fresh call from her father increased to a pitch of agony. At length, however, we were all fairly in the carriage, poor Maria struggling to pull on her new gloves, which seemed as unmanageable as the shoes. We proceeded at a very cautious pace, such as might have befitted mourners at a funeral, but were startled nevertheless by a violent shock, as we passed through the Park Crescent Gate.

"Oh!" exclaimed Lilly, "we shall be smashed on the road."

"Holloa, there!" exclaimed an omnibus-driver; and our horses were suddenly reined in.

"No harm done," said the quiet, reassuring voice of my uncle, as he pressed the bride's trembling hand within his own.

Without any further interruption we drove up to the church, had an indistinct view of something like an ill-dressed crowd without, and a clearer one of a well-dressed crowd within, which filled the lighted vestry to overflowing.

"Which is the bridegroom?" I whispered to Lilly.

"Oh! that middle-aged gentleman in the white waistcoat, who looks excited and a little nervous; and that tall one, with the light moustache and bright, intelligent eye, he is the bridesman—a young barrister, Mr. Temple."

"Now, is all ready?" said my uncle, advancing forward, while the crowd pressed backwards on each side, and made a lane for him to pass through.

"The licence!" suggested the aged clerk, laying his hand on a clumsy desk, which appeared on the green cloth-covered table.

"The licence!" repeated my uncle, turning towards the bridegroom, who looked a little startled at the word, fumbled in this pocket and then in that, and bent his anxious gaze on the bridesman.

"Have you it?" he faltered forth.

"Not I!" exclaimed he of the light moustache, with an expression of alarm. "You surely have not left it behind?"

"I am afraid," said the bridegroom, "in the confusion—and—but there will be time to get it—it's at my lodging in H— Street—if—if!"

"I'll be off this instant!" cried Temple; "only say where I can find it."

"My rosewood desk—here's the key," faltered poor Mr. Fane, fumbling again, and at length producing a small bunch of keys from his pocket.

"I'll be back in a twinkling;" and, as Temple sprang down the steps, he looked as though he would outstrip the winged Mercury.

"Take one of the carriages," shouted Walter after him, his dismal countenance looking more dismal than ever.

My uncle again drew out his watch: "Nine-and-twenty minutes to twelve," said he.

"Hard driving will do it," observed one of the guests.

"If he drive hard he will be indicted for manslaughter," said Walter, "or he will smash the carriage against the first lamp-post on the way."

The poor bride sat down in a corner, looking very drooping and dull, paying very little attention to the kind words and affectionate wishes whispered by lady guests in her ear. The bridegroom stationed himself at the door, straining his eyes to pierce the fog; and Dr. Vincent held his watch in his hand, while Lilly stood stamping her little foot in an agony of impatience.

*Twenty minutes to twelve!* The whisper went round: "Canonical hours will be passed before he can return. He will never be back in time."

"If any man could do the thing, he would," observed Walter.

*A quarter to twelve!* What a silence there was in the vestry-room! Every one seemed stopping to count the six unwelcome strokes, as though some faint hope had existed in sanguine minds that there might be only four after all.

*Ten minutes to twelve!* Then there was whispering and moving, grave looks from some, while others turned aside to conceal the mirth which they could hardly restrain, and yet felt it most heartless to show. Lilly exclaimed, in a tone of suppressed vexation, that she wished she had gone for the licence herself.

"My friends," said Dr. Vincent, advancing to the table, and looking round with the quiet manner of one who has a disagreeable duty to perform, and feels that the sooner the task is got over the better; "unforeseen circumstances, and the contingency of the weather, have delayed the ceremony which we have assembled to witness, until an hour too late for its celebration. I need not say what regret I feel; I am sure that every one present shares it. I can but invite every guest who has favoured us with his company to-day, to meet here at ten o'clock on the day after to-morrow, when we trust that no inauspicious event will again occur to interrupt the happiness of so joyful an occasion."

As he concluded his sentence, the clock began to strike twelve; and heated, panting, and excited, Temple rushed up the steps with the licence in his hand.

"Too late!" tolled the clock. "Too late!" murmured the bridegroom; and the poor bride, who was beginning to weep, was hurried away by her father.

"It was no fault of mine, indeed it was not," exclaimed Temple, as soon as the parties most concerned had quitted the church—for Mr. Fane had accompanied poor Maria. "I wish that I had trusted my own feet, and never have been so foolish as to enter a carriage."

He was not inclined to explain farther at that time; but when, on the dispersion of the company, by special invitation the bridesman accompanied us back to the house, while we slowly drove back through the fog, he gave us a full account of his expedition.

"We drove on at a pace which endangered our necks, and on any less pressing occasion might have rendered me amenable to the law. I really could see nothing of where I was going: that was the driver's look-out; but I kept my head constantly out of the window, shouting to the coachman, 'No. 22—drive on! drive on!' partly with the object of increasing his speed, and partly to give luckless passengers warning to get out of our way."

"On we dashed. I do not know this part of the town very well, so I soon became bewildered as to the direction we were pursuing. The fog grew denser and denser, and I was every moment expecting a crash. At last the coachman pulled up at a door, and I was out of the carriage in a moment."

"I can't see the numbers, sir, but I think this must be it."

"No, this is No. 23," I cried, and sprang to the next door. 'Twas 25; I darted back, and found the right number at last. I roused the echoes with a thundering knock, and rang till I snapped the bell-wire. A servant girl opened the door, all agast, doubtless thinking that the house must be on fire. I pushed past her, and rushed up the staircase; into the sitting-room I dashed like a tornado, and looked anxiously round for the object of my search.

"Who are you? what do you want?" exclaimed an elderly gentleman, rising in amazement from his arm-chair.

"The rosewood desk; ah! here it is; don't delay me."

"Don't delay you!" shouted the gentleman, his astonishment almost overpowering his indignation; "do you mean to carry off my property before my eyes?"

"I started with sudden alarm. 'Is not this No. 22, H— Street?' I inquired."

"No, it is Q— Street."

"A thousand apologies!" I exclaimed, clearing a whole flight of stairs in three springs; I could not wait to say more, and left the gentleman, I believe, in doubt as to whether his wild visitor were a madman or a burglar."

"But you reached H— Street at last?"

"Not, alas! in time," said young Temple. "Well, we will hope for better fortune on Thursday."



We had by this time arrived in Harley Street, and entered the house, whose decorations made it only look more dismal.

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Lilly, "send away that band; I can't stand that mocking music just now; and shut the dining-room door; we don't want the sight of the breakfast."

"It would be to expose ourselves to the fate of Tantalus," whispered Temple, "to look on the feast which it would be treason to taste."

"I must run up and see poor dear Maria," cried Lilly.

"Maria and Mr. Fane propose remaining quietly in my study," said Dr. Vincent, coming forward from the room that he mentioned. "Let us all adjourn to the drawing-room," he added, in a more cheerful tone; "I have ordered the candles to be lighted there. We must all make the best of this little *contretemps*; there is really nothing serious in the matter. Depend upon it Lilly," he added, kindly laying his hand on her shoulder, "quick wits like yours will devise some plan of drawing pleasure from the most unlikely source. You must make the time pass pleasantly to your cousin."

"Well, what are we to do now?" said Walter, as he closed the drawing-room door behind the party. "The fog shuts us up here in prison; we shall neither be disposed to sing, dance, nor read; while smoking is of course out of the question amongst ladies."

"Oh, we've had enough of smoke to last us for a century," exclaimed the young barrister.

"What a fearfully long day I fear we shall find it," observed Walter.

"A thought has struck me," exclaimed Lilly, at once regaining all her former vivacity. "I propose that we should all take to our goose-quills, each employing the time in writing a story. Writing them will be excellent occupation for to-day, and reading them aloud for to-morrow."

"Capital! capital!" cried Temple, who was something of a poet, and had written several pieces for a popular magazine.

"And we'll have our stories on gilt-edged cream paper, and fasten them together into a white satin cover, and present them as a gift to the dear bride," suggested Lilly.

"I highly approve of the plan," said my uncle, glad of any proposition that promised to render the time of waiting less tedious. "I myself will become a contributor." Lilly clapped her hands at the announcement. "But I have one little suggestion to make," he continued, "that improvement may be combined with amusement; let us fix on one common subject for our stories, which may bear on some moral principle. Suppose that we choose SELFISHNESS for our theme. The subject admits of great variety in its treatment, since selfishness appears in so many different forms. It haunts us in the place of business, as well as in the gay halls of pleasure; it is shown in the burst of passion, the languor of *ennui*, in the dark scowl of envy, or the smile of dissipation. Perhaps we shall be the wiser as well as the better for the mental exercise proposed by Lilly."

"We must give the collection a name," said Walter, "written with sweeping flourishes on the title-page, and embroidered on the white satin

cover. What name would you suggest, cousin Nelly?"

I timidly replied, "Tales upon Selfishness." "Oh! that would scarcely suit a bridal gift," said Lilly, gaily; "it would look as though something personal were intended."

"A Wreath of Orange-blossoms!" proposed Mr. Temple; "it is the fashion to style collections, wreaths."

"*A Wreath of Smoke*," I rather should call it," laughed Lilly, "for it certainly will owe its existence to the fog."

Her proposition was carried by acclamation, and with a new spirit of cheerfulness infused into our group, we dispersed in various directions to plunge deep into the labours of composition.

I will not dwell farther upon the occurrences of the day, nor say how I puzzled my own brains, consulted Lilly, the map of London, and—must I confess it?—the dictionary too, and threw many a spoilt sheet of paper away, and felt half inclined, when I had concluded my tale, to put it at the back of the fire.

#### A TROUBLESOME FLY.

AT this season of the year many of our readers will be experiencing the annoyance produced by swarms of flies. Now is the time when the blue-bottle buzzes sonorously as he makes ineffectual attempts to escape through the window-pane; and now is the season when the common house-fly swarms round our tables, helping himself, without leave asked or granted, to our jam and our sugar. Little, however, does many an English housewife, as she prepares her ingenious flytrap of cut paper, or her more deadly mixture of poison, know the terror which a fly can sometimes inspire. Astonished, no doubt, will she be to learn that there is one little insect of this character, the sight of which has given more alarm to many an enterprising colonist or traveller, than would the spectacle of a lion or tiger in full fury. It is indeed so. The civilization of some parts of Africa has been as much hindered by the presence of a certain fly as by the slave trade. Indeed, we do not know but that the latter, in the localities in question, is the least formidable danger of the two. Our fleets and squadrons will in time put slavery down; but, for the other pest, no remedy is yet known.

The insect in question is the *tsetse*, or poison-fly of Africa (*Glossina morsitans*.) Possessed of a particular sort of venom, it infixes its sting into cattle, which fall dead before it. In vain does the traveller carry horses or other animals with him, for this scourge annihilates them, while, as a necessary consequence, it precludes whole tribes of Africans from pastoral pursuits, which could not properly be carried on without the aid of cattle.

Mr. Andersson, a very enterprising traveller, whose work on Lake Ngami will be found full of interest, has preserved some curious notices of this destructive insect. We now give the results of his observation, referring such of our readers as wish more information about the other productions of Africa to his lively and adventurous volume.\*

\* "Lake Ngami; or, Explorations and Discoveries during Four Years' Wanderings in the Wilds of South Western Africa." By Charles John Andersson.

"The tsetse," he writes, "is found chiefly in the bush, or amongst the reeds, but rarely in the open country. It is confined to particular spots, and is never known to shift its haunts. Thus, cattle may be seen grazing securely on one side of a river, whilst the opposite bank swarms with the insect. Should the natives, who are well acquainted with localities frequented by the fly, have occasion to change their cattle-posts, and are obliged to pass through tracts of country where it exists, they choose, I am told, a moonlight winter's night; as, during the hours of rest in the cold season, it does not bite.

"In size, the tsetse is somewhat less than the common blue fly that settles on meat; but its wings are longer. Yet, though so small and insignificant in appearance, its bite carries with it a poison equal to that of the most deadly reptile. Many is the traveller who, from his draught-oxen and horses having been destroyed by this pestiferous insect, has not only had the object of his journey completely marred, but his personal safety endangered by the loss of his means of conveyance.



TSETSE FLY.

"Very lately, indeed, a party of Griquas, about twenty in number, who were elephant-hunting to the north-west of the Ngami, and who were provided with three waggons and a large number of trek, or draught-oxen, lost, prior to their return to the lake, all their cattle by the bite of the tsetse. Some horses, brought with them to further their sport, shared a similar fate.

"The very same year that this disaster happened to the Griquas, a party of Englishmen, amongst whom was my friend, Mr. Frederick Green, attempted to reach Libèbé; but they had only proceeded seven or eight days' journey to the north of the Ngami, when both horses and cattle were bitten by the fly in question, and the party were in consequence compelled to make a hasty retreat. One of the number, I am told, was thus deprived of as many as thirty-six horses, excellent hunters, and all sustained heavy losses in cattle.

"There are large tribes which cannot keep either cattle or sheep because the tsetse abounds in their country. But it is only fatal to domestic animals, as wild animals feed undisturbed in parts infested by the insect. Yet many of them, such as oxen and buffaloes, horses and zebras, dogs and jackals, etc., possess somewhat the same nature. Moreover, it bites man and no danger follows. The sensation experienced has not inaptly been likened to the sting of a flea. The problem to be solved

is, what quality exists in domestication which renders domestic animals obnoxious to this poison? Is man not as much a domestic animal as a dog? Is it the tsetse at all which kills the animal?

"Captain Vardon, of the Indian army, one of the earlier pioneers of the more interior parts of Southern Africa, was amongst the first to decide the point; for he rode his horse up a hill infested by tsetse, and in twenty days his doubts were removed by the death of his horse.

"According to the statement of the celebrated explorers, Messrs. Oswell and Livingstone, who were severe sufferers by the tsetse, the following symptoms are observed in the ox when bitten: the eye runs, the glands under the throat swell, the coat loses its gloss, there is a peculiar flaccidity of the muscles generally, and emaciation commences, which proceeds unchecked until—perhaps months after the bite—purging supervenes, and the animal perishes of exhaustion. Some die soon after the bite is inflicted, especially if they are in good condition, or should rain fall; but, in general, the process of emaciation goes on for many weeks. In some cases, the animals become blind before they die.

"From what I have seen of the tsetse," writes Mr. Oswell to me, "I believe that three or four flies are sufficient to kill a full-grown ox. We examined about twenty of ours that were bitten and died, and the appearances were *similar* in all. On raising the skin, we perceived a glairy appearance of the muscles and flesh, which were much wasted. The stomach and intestines were healthy; heart, lungs, and liver, sometimes all, but invariably one or the other, much diseased. The heart in particular attracted our attention. It was no longer a firm and muscular organ, but collapsed readily on compression, and had the appearance of flesh that had been steeped in water. The blood of the whole carcass was greatly diminished in quantity. Not more than twenty pints (a small pail full) were obtained from the largest ox, and this thick and albuminous; the hands, when plunged into it, came out free of stain. The poison would seem to grow in the blood, and, through the blood, affect the vital organs."

"A curious feature in the case is, that dogs, though reared on milk, die if bitten, while calves, and other young *sucking* animals, are safe as long as they *suck*. Man, and all the wild animals, escape with impunity. Can the poison be alkaline, and neutralized by the acid?"

After such a narrative as this, we do not doubt that spiders will appear to our readers a much more praiseworthy class of insects than they have hitherto seemed. Indeed, had Nero, with his fly-killing propensities, been some African potentate, who confined himself to the massacre of the tsetse, he would have earned a title to the gratitude of posterity, instead of getting the stigma of cruelty affixed to him, and coming down to us with the words, *Ne musca quidem* ("not even a fly") appended to his name.

Those are happy afflictions, how grievous soever to flesh and blood, that help to introduce us to, and improve us in an acquaintance with God.

HALF the pains that many take to lose their souls, would serve to save them.

## WHAT I SAW AT KILLARNEY.

NO. I.

It is a lovely morning in the second week of July, 1856, when, arriving at the Dublin Railway station, on one of the swiftest of those "funny" Irish jaunting cars which seem so unsafe and unsocial—with the feet overhanging the sides, and your back turned on your best friend on the other side (the true Irish *vis-à-vis*)—and yet are soon found to be neither one or the other—that I start with a party of companions for Killarney. True to my purpose, I shall not dwell on the Duke of Leinster's seat of Carton, seen on the distant right on the other side of the Liffey; nor on the round tower of Clondalkin, and the legendary Rock of Dunamase; nor on Tullow, with its wooded environs and pleasing slopes; all of which in succession we sweep by. It is evening, and we are at Killarney station. Here is a bran-new hotel, built by the railway company, and under English management. The napkins and plates, and everything except the viands, which are kept hot till you walk in, are on the table. Will you not enter? You may "go farther" and perhaps "fare worse." No; we are off elsewhere. The greater portion of our fellow travellers are borne away to the Lake Hotel, a couple of miles beyond the town; but as there are no ladies with us, and one of our bachelor companions has a lodging-house in the town full in his view, we set out on foot, with a ragged specimen of a "Kerry boy" to guide our steps and carry our scanty luggage.

What! is this Killarney? I see, far south, the peaks of mountains, but where are the lakes? We are passing down a miry road, amid old mud houses, roofless and deserted, and after a little we turn the corner and are in the town. What a tatterdemalion aspect do its streets, buildings, and people wear! True, there are shops, but they have "fronts" and windows that look out upon you forbiddingly and stupidly, like owls. The market-house is there, but its whitewash is a dirty brown; and ranged along the streets, and around the market-house aforesaid, (some of the men with spades in their hands,) is a teeming population, who seem to have nothing to do but to look at the strangers. Rude, unkempt, and unwashed, many of them have come into the town from rural districts early in the day, and they linger still, some round the doors of the public-houses, in noisy groups. The first impressions, then, of Killarney are decidedly unfavourable. The town, with its 10,000 inhabitants, is a poor one; it has a worn and withered look; its parish church seems rapidly falling to decay; while a new Romish chapel in the place, somewhat pretentious in style, but with an unfinished barn-like look, and a convent on the slope towards the west, much in the fashion of a union workhouse, serve little to relieve Killarney from gloomy associations. Here is a town, full of poverty, filth, and ignorance, unattractive and prison-like in its very air, in the immediate vicinity of perhaps the loveliest scenery in the world,

"Where every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile."

We ensconce ourselves in decent lodgings in the main street, and ask for tea. But shall I not go

to market myself, and order some substantial edibles to accompany our evening tea-dinner after so long a journey? Am I not at large, away from London smoke and dust, and mental toil? Am I not as young in heart as when in college days I used to go to the butcher's and choose my own meat? So my proposal is made to my two friends. With these fellow-travellers and fellow-lodgers I sally forth, intent on getting the best mutton chops Killarney can furnish, and to send them home as "fixings" and ornaments for our tea-table.

We are directed to a shop, where we find a butcher with his dead mutton behind one counter, and his wife selling milk behind the other. Now in this proximity of meat and milk lay the peril which we encountered. As the butcher was cutting the chops which we had ordered—in the exuberance of good spirits, and without the slightest intentional allusion to her husband's slaughtered victims—I said laughingly to his spouse, looking at a churn well-nigh filled with milk, "Ah, that is milk of the right sort! It's not like our London milk, which they say has got *sheep's brains* mixed up with it!" To my surprise I saw the face of the woman darken, and her Milesian black eyes glisten with displeasure. I instantly guessed that she had understood me to say that *her* milk was mixed with sheep's brains! I apologised and explained, but was not very successful.

As soon as we were gone, she must have told her husband of the insult which, through her, she believed both of them had received. We had scarcely, therefore, turned the corner of the street, when, turning round at the noise, I found one of my friends, a fat, red-faced, peaceful Yorkshireman, standing with face redder than ever, and head stretched out, with words of deprecation and denial on his lips, and hands apologetically spread forth, while the little butcher was leaping and dancing around him in furious anger! "What! what, sir, did you insult my wife for, sir? For one farthing, sir, I would!"—Here the torrent of abuse and threats was arrested by the "I—I assure you, my friend, you are quite mistaken! I know nothing about it! What is the matter?"

The scene, to a spectator who was not involved in the scrape, would have been irresistibly ludicrous and comic. But to me the feeling was different. I had been the innocent occasion of all this fury, the infection of which was fast spreading itself among a gathering crowd of as savage-looking men as I had ever seen. My Yorkshire friend was unconscious of what had taken place in the shop, having left it before the conversation with the butcher's wife took place, and I did not know but that his protestations of innocence would cause the angry husband to turn upon myself, and that I would be severely handled, or all three of us, perhaps, might be almost torn to pieces.

But my younger companion, a man of singular coolness, pushed me away, and desired me to retreat. He then, with soft words, which fell like oil on the troubled waters, approached the butcher, drew him off from his victim, pointed out the nature of the mistake of his wife, and with the tact of an Irishman who knew how to manage a mob, appealed to "the boys" around, and raised such a laugh at the little man's expense, that he

was perfectly ashamed of himself, and slunk away. "Well," said I to myself, "I shan't attempt any more jokes of doubtful meaning as long as I am in Ireland;" and so, rather thankful for my escape, I poured out the tea in Miss —'s drawing-room, and helped my friends and myself to the capital chops which, though bought at the price of only fivepence per pound, had nearly proved too dear to us.

Darkness was now settling down over the town, and it was too late to make explorations of the neighbourhood, or to get even a glimpse of a bay of the nearest lake. But a despatch arrives from a trusty friend, twenty miles off, who finds himself unable at once to join our party, and to bring with him the materials for a feast which he intended to give us on the shores of the Upper Lake. And that our friends at the Lake Hotel may know all this, I am obliged, while the rain falls fast, and in the darkness of the night, deepened by the gloom of the old trees which overhang the road, to walk two long Irish miles. My boy guide is a true son of the soil, one "who never breaks your heart with a bad answer." And so, when I asked what is the distance to the Lake Hotel, he says, "Only a mile, sir;" and when a mile at least is traversed, the answer, given cheerily, is still the same. The "mile" in Ireland, I concluded, was much the same as "a mile and a bittock" in Scotland.

Arrived at last at the Lake Hotel, I find my friends snug and merry, and the ladies full of joyous anticipations of to-morrow. So, trudging back to Killarney town, I soothe my weariness with thoughts and hopes for "to-morrow" also, and cure it finally and fully by a sound sleep.

Up in the morning early, and breakfast over, our hall door is besieged by importunate "guides" and boatmen proffering their services. But we stop the clamour by telling them that we shall wait till our expected friend arrives; in truth, in substance we inform them, although not in those very words, that *he*, taking entire charge of us, is to be "our guide, philosopher, and friend."

Speedily, the *disiecta membra* of our party are recruited in front of the Lake Hotel, and, hiring for our exclusive use one of those elongated cars, which Bianconi made so familiar to travellers in Ireland, we, after a passing glance at a boating party, and catching our first glimpse of the Lower Lake, sweep out of the gates into the public road.

Here a number of young girls, with specimens of small boxes and toys made of arbutus wood, assail us, and with incredible speed and perseverance run after us, importuning us to buy from them. Around the gate, too, and afterwards in the town, beggars obstruct our progress. Mrs. Hall, in her "Week at Killarney," tells how, in the small town of Macroom, she bargained to give every applicant one halfpenny each next morning, if only allowed to examine the town quietly in the evening. The bargain was agreed upon, and faithfully fulfilled on both sides by the contracting parties. No beggars intruded themselves for the night, and "next day," she says, "it cost us exactly three shillings and tenpence to redeem the pledge we had given;" no fewer than ninety-two having assembled at the inn-gate.

I can testify from personal observation that

never, except in the town of Drogheda, in mail-coach days, and before poor laws and workhouses were established, to the infinite disgust of the street paupers, have I seen or listened to such a numerous band of eager and eloquent beggars as at Killarney. And what force and wit, too, are in their appeals! A lady sits by your side on the car before starting. "Good luck to your ladyship's happy face this morning; sure ye'll have the light heart in my bosom before ye go?" And, cries that old blind man with a flattering tongue that one day or other must surely have "licked the Blarney-stone," "Och, then, look at the dark man that can't see if yer beauty is like yer sweet voice." Then there is the promise held out of "the widdy and five small children," if only a little relief is extended, not to speak of the still more ingenious myth put forward by "the poor craytter that's got no childer to show your honour—they're down in the sickness" (typhus fever), "and the man that owns them at sea."

True, the poor-law system and the dread of the constabulary are fast reducing the number of applicants; and yet here, at Killarney, you will be pretty sure to have one as faithful in your pursuit as was that modest fellow who followed a traveller in Wicklow for upwards of a mile, and on bidding him good-bye, asked for a sixpence. "For what?" inquired the gentleman; "what have you done for me?" "Ah, then! sure haven't I been keeping your honour in dis-course?"

Driving rapidly along the road, southward, and entering the gate of a beautiful demesne, we suddenly come in sight of Mucross Abbey, close to the borders of the Lower Lake. True, the garish eye of day divests the ruins of that charm which comes from the pale glimpses of the moon; for it is quite as true of Mucross as of Melrose, that if you would see it "aright," you must

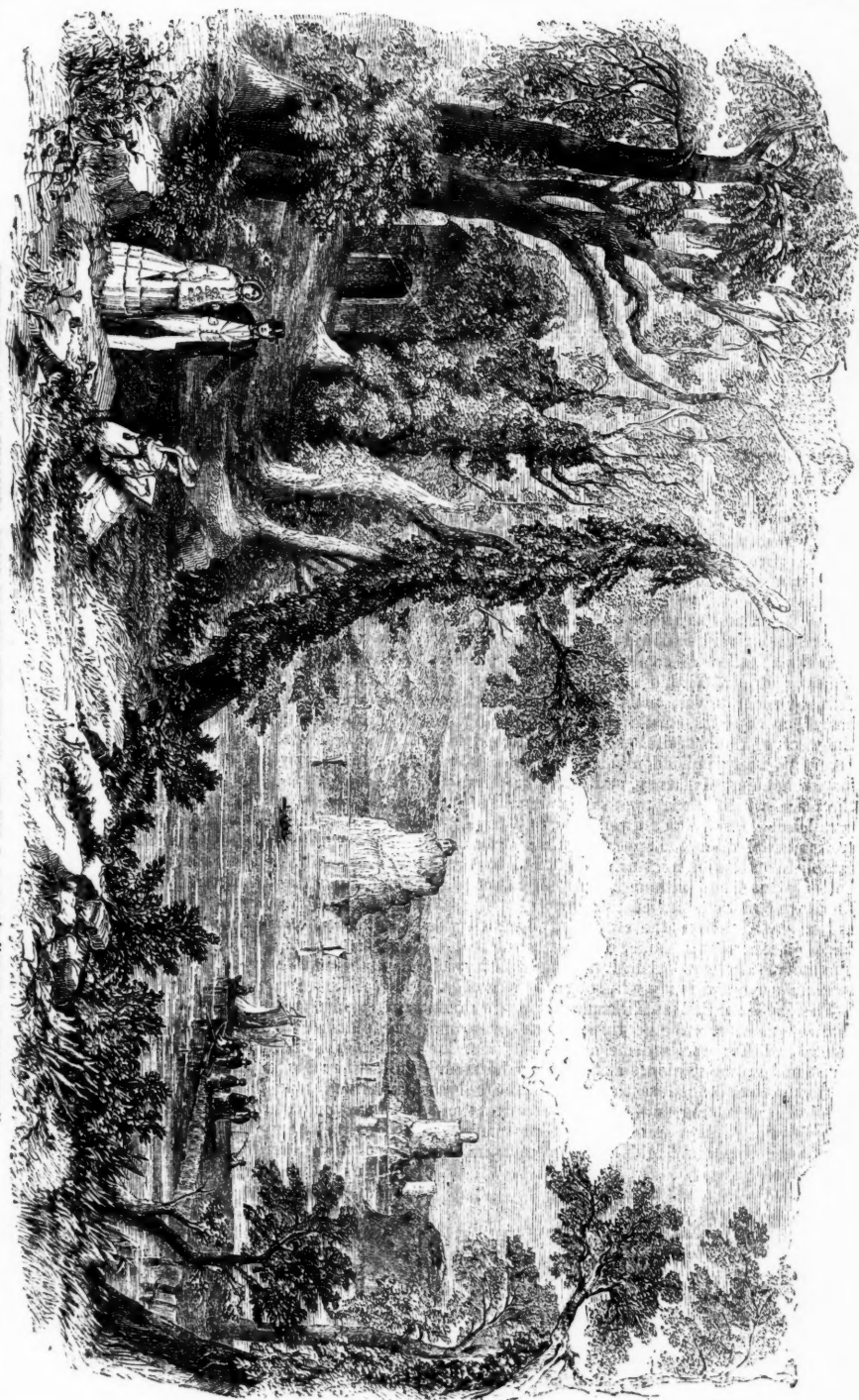
"Go visit it by pale moonlight."

Yet say—with these umbrageous trees of every shade of living green, that "Lady's Walk," and that "Rock Walk," of still greater beauty nigh at hand; with that fine and almost perfectly preserved oriel window; with the treacherous yet graceful ivy draping and concealing shafts, buttresses, and broken walls; with those old tombstones in the chapel floor; with that fine old spacious kitchen, where "friars of orders gray" once had feasts prepared worthy of a king; that refectory, where the good things were enjoyed; and that cloister, with its twenty-two arches, in the centre of which grows a magnificent yew-tree that covers as a roof the whole area, coeval with the abbey itself—say, is not this a scene full of deepest interest?

Remounting our car, and sweeping rapidly along the edge of the lake, passing through the devious windings of the pathway, as bays and indentations of the lovely waters shape its course, we next come to Torc Waterfall. The rain is falling fast by this time. It patters upon the leaves, and glides harmlessly off over umbrellas and cloaks; and it is coming down just in time to "get up" for our admiration—summer time though it be—a cascade of exceeding beauty. Right joyously we receive its sprinkling of spray, and watch it



IMPRESSIONS, LAKE OF KILLARNEY, COPIED BY PERMISSION FROM MR. AND MRS. E. C. HALL'S "WALK AT KILLARNEY."



as it foams and leaps from rock to rock, till it finds repose in the bed of the stream below.

High overhead, the spreading trees make "a gloom profound," and on either bank rise the richest specimens of ferns. And here is a lady friend from Glasgow, regardless of rain and slippery mud, who is eagerly pulling up some of the choicest. Be it known to all fern-fanciers, that close to the Torc Waterfall has been found the rarest of British ferns—the bristle fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*). It is peculiar to Ireland, and has not hitherto been discovered either in England, Scotland, or Wales. It is described by Edward Newman, Esq., F.L.S., in his elegant and interesting "History of British Ferns." But better far, dear reader, than any description is it to go to the spot, and search, cull, and examine for yourself.

After a brief repast in a wood-house—a little cottage with a kindly peasant mother, and her children close at hand, and sharing the *débris* of our dinner among the little ones—we return homewards along the shores of the Lower Lake. The road winds altogether over a distance of twelve miles. The views are so varied, that it is like a kaleidoscope, and as if you visited at least twenty lakes and gazed admiringly on hundreds of lovely arbutus-covered islands, and on as many mountains in a single day.

Emerging on the public road, we enter Killarney town, and draw up—whether we like it or not, at the driver's fixed resolve, and, like all other "fashionables" who come hither as tourists—at the door of Mr. Egan's manufactory. Here are drawing-room tables, polished and inlaid chessboards, work-boxes, card-cases, etc., all made from the wood of the beautiful arbutus, which not only covers "sweet Innisfallen" and other islands, but has its home at Killarney, and gives a charm to the place, which to me appeared unique and unparalleled. I shall not dwell on the "touting" system adopted, or the appeals made by two rival establishments to attract us. We tried to please both by purchases, although our "first love" had the largest share of our custom.

Nor shall I tell of the crowds of beggars, old, middle-aged, young, lame, decrepit specimens of humanity, who now plaintively, and anon with twinkling eye and ready wit, sought our charity.

The day—our first at Killarney—is closing fast. The rain is over. We go through the gates, and enter Lord Kenmare's demesne, look at his fine house and grounds, glance at the Lower Lake and its mountains, bathed as they are in the golden light of the setting sun, and come back to our lodgings full of plans and longings for to-morrow's trip to the Upper and Middle Lakes, and the Gap of Dunloo.

#### CANISTER FOOD.

PERHAPS some people who read these pages may have heard of a question which a certain witty epicure once proposed to a certain dead fish. The fish, be it understood, was no sooner set upon the epicure's plate, than it gave indications of having being much longer out of the water than was compatible with freshness; and as we westerns are of opinion (contrary to the notions of the

Siamese) that piscine food cannot be too fresh, the wit demurred to eating it. To give the entertainer a hint of the state of the case was a delicate matter, but the wit accomplished it thus. Taking the fish upon his fork, he first raised it to his mouth, and whispered something; then taking it away from his mouth, he placed it to his ear. "What are you doing?" demanded the guest.

"I am asking the fish a question."

"A question?"

"I asked it if by chance it happened to know how my brother was, who is at sea; but the fish says it has not been there for the last fortnight."

Well, reader, but I have partaken of fish which had been dead ten years; and, judging from appearances, that fish might have been quietly stowed away for the delectation of our grandchildren's children, and might have tasted, after that long lapse of years, as well as ever. I do not mean salted fish: indeed, the latter would not last so long; I allude to fish preserved in tin canisters, hermetically sealed, by a process which I shall describe. Fish has been chosen for illustration because it is the most delicate of all animal foods; but the canister mode of preserving is alike applicable to fish, flesh, and fowl.

To understand the philosophy of the process, one must commence with the fact, that if air be totally excluded from animal or vegetable substances, decomposition cannot ensue. Now, such being the case, they cannot spoil; for it is because of decomposition that unsalted meats, after keeping some time, become offensive.

I do not know any industrial art of common life, the various steps of which are more worthy to be seen and studied than the one now under discussion. The operations of some processes are interesting only to certain classes. An engineer, for instance, will look with pleasure on the manufacture of a steam engine, or any other triumph of mechanical skill; a tailor might gaze with admiration on the metamorphosis of steel wire into sewing needles; whilst I suppose the birth, parentage, and education of a sewing machine, though pleasing matters for a slop contractor to think about, would lacerate a tailor's susceptibilities not a little. All, however, must eat and drink. These are matters which come home to everybody's appreciation; therefore few, I imagine, would depart from a canister-preserving provision workshop without experiencing pleasure at what they had seen. The housewife might there learn several hints which would be serviceable to her; the mechanist would see performed some delicate operations in his own line; and the philanthropist would bring away with him food for contemplation, in reflecting how much a few obvious scientific applications can accomplish by equalizing God's gifts, taking the exuberance of animal life from regions where it is valueless from its very abundance, and conveying it to other regions where hungry multitudes are waiting to be fed.

Perhaps the reader will follow me ideally into one of these food-preserving stores. He had better go hungry, for nice things have to be tasted—how else shall he be able to tender his opinions? We enter the premises through a large double door, and immediately discover ourselves to be in a place where something unusual is

going on. The house is full of savoury smells. Workpeople are hurrying hither and thither, as if they were running a race against time, which, in one sense, they are, for the operation does not admit of indefinite delay. The medley of people you casually meet with in the passages is a peculiar feature. Some have butcher's aprons, for butchers they are; others are clad in the white cap and pinafore adopted by cooks—this is intelligible; but presently you will see a dark-skinned tinker-looking man, with a soldering-iron in one hand and a tin plate in the other. He does not look very appetising; you begin to wish you had lunched. Do not fear; that tin-plate worker has not to finger the viands, nor indeed is he so dirty as he looks: fingering metal all day long would make you look grimy too. Let us now go systematically to work, beginning at the beginning, and understanding as we go on.

Although canister-preserved provisions have not yet found their way into ordinary households, there are some little articles of food commonly known to most housekeepers, and which may serve for immediate illustration. Everybody knows, I presume, how to open a box of sardines. The opening is accomplished by a knife of peculiar construction, which, perforating the tin-plate, rips it open and displays the fish. Well, it is quite clear the sardines never got into the case by the way we extract them: they were soldered in; but that soldering involves some nice points, which we will now endeavour to make out.

Of all articles of cookery, a soup is most congenial to the canister-process; a soup, therefore, we will select for illustration, if the reader pleases. Going into the tin-plate department, we see men busily engaged forming canisters of all shapes and sizes; but the soup canisters are always cylindrical, and it is those we have to deal with at present. Being finished, all except the top, they look very much like coffee canisters with their lids removed. In this condition they are sent into the cook's shop, where, the soup materials being inserted, the filled canisters return once more to the tin-plate worker, who solders on the top, through which latter he perforates a little hole, and returns the canisters to the cooking department, where we will follow them.

"Too many cooks spoil the broth," says an old adage; but two cooks at least are engaged in the manufacture of every canister of preserved soup. One cook mixes the materials, the other cooks them; and as the cooking operation requires much address, the second cook must be something of a chemist and a mechanic as well. The cases are now arranged on a frame-work platform of steam pipes, and are surrounded with a liquid, the boiling point of which is considerably higher than the boiling point of water. The bath reaches nearly up to the top of each canister, but not quite, for reasons which will presently be seen. Of course the heat of the bath communicates itself to the materials of the soup within the case, which, after the lapse of a certain time, judged of by the operator, are sufficiently cooked. So far as the preservation of the viands is concerned, they can hardly be too much cooked: no crudeness, not a particle of air must be left, else decomposition sets in. The necessity for over-dressing, in point of fact, is

almost the only objection which can be brought against canister-preserved provisions; but the objection does not apply to a soup. Over a tank of boiling soup-canisters stands the operator—the *closing cook*, if we like to call him so—with soldering iron in hand. He must not be spoken to: his mind should be as undisturbed as a ship's steersman's. Visitors do not abound in preserved provision manufactories; if they did, probably it would be necessary to hang up the announcement in big letters, "It is forbidden on any pretence to speak to the cook." Ordinary cooks have the advantage of tasting their cookery to learn how it gets on. Not so the tin-canister cook. The little aperture through which the steam escapes would barely admit a knitting needle, much less a spoon. The tin-canister cook has no other guides but time and judgment. He is very much in the position of one boiling an egg, only eggs do not involve a similar amount of responsibility to preserved provisions.

When boiling is judged to have been sufficiently prolonged, the cook proceeds to stop the aperture through which the steam escapes, with solder, excluding every particle of air. This is not quite so simple a matter as the reader perhaps imagines. It does not suffice to touch the orifice with solder whilst steam is yet escaping; that would never do. The steam rushes out so furiously that the solder would not adhere. The generation of steam must be stopped momentarily before the hole can be soldered; and, what is more, it must be stopped without removing the tin canister from the hot bath in which it is placed. In practice these matters are simple enough, but they are by no means obvious, as the reader will perhaps discover who tries to think them out for himself.

The operator proceeds thus. In his left hand he holds a sponge filled with water, and in his right a soldering-iron. Squeezing the sponge over a tin canister, he causes a few drops of water to fall upon it, which, by the cold they produce, check immediately the evolution of steam, and if the sponging be prolonged, air—that great spoliator of food—will enter. The end to be attained, then, is this. There must be an instant at which the evolution of steam ceases, and before which any air has entered the aperture: this is the critical moment seized by the closing cook to drop a little solder on the open part of the canister, and close it hermetically.

The closing cook's responsibilities do not end with the sealing of each canister. It is necessary to allow the provisions, after soldering, and, of course, after the escape of steam has been prevented, to remain for a time in the hot bath. Steam still continues to be generated, though it can no longer escape; it therefore presses with great force against the sides of the canister. But the resistance of tin plate to steam pressure is limited within narrow bounds. The position of the cook now is not only one of anxiety but of danger. A manufacturer of canister provisions once told me a tale of a closing cook who was killed by a dead turkey. I see no reason to doubt the truth of this. If a case of provisions should burst in a caldron of boiling water, the consequences would be bad enough; how much more serious, then, the accident must be, seeing that each canister is sur-

rounded by a bath of corrosive liquid (chloride of calcium), I leave the reader to judge.

When our soup canisters have been subjected as long as the operator thinks necessary to this last trying ordeal, he removes them and places them aside in what he calls "the trying room," of which more by and by. Let us hope they will pass well through the ordeal, and let us see how the canister cookery of other provisions is managed.

A question may have presented itself to the reader by this time, as being somewhat difficult of solution. The preserving process is necessarily a boiling process, as we have seen; how can the canister cook manage to give us roast meat? He does manage after a fashion, and a very pretty fashion it is; but the roast is not of quite the same character as the roast meat prepared in our kitchens. The scheme adopted is this. The joint ultimately to find its way out of a tin canister as a roast joint, was roasted either before a fire or by oven heat, before it got in; limiting the closing cook's operations to the mere final boiling and soldering.

A few words now about the proving room. Fortunately, though an opaque metal wall prevents our looking into the contents of a tin canister, and seeing whether its contents are good; though the steam orifice is hermetically sealed, and we can, therefore, no longer appeal to another sense for information; there is yet a ready means of ascertaining whether the contents be good or bad, that is to say, whether they are fresh as when inclosed, or whether decomposition has supervened. We have only to reflect on the nature of the various stages of the preserving process, to be convinced that if all have gone on as the operator desired, such portions of each case (and there will always be some) as are not filled with provisions, will approach more or less to the condition of a vacuum, and that the external air, pressing upon a tin canister thus circumstanced, would squeeze its sides close down upon the meat. Indeed, canisters of provisions either are or ought to be distorted as to shape; they should be crumpled, or shrivelled like certain varieties of peas. Let no one who lays out money in these provisions be fascinated by perfection of form: this may be held to correspond with failure, and to be indicative of it.

Consider now the great boon conferred upon humanity by these canister-preserved provisions. Look at them in connection with seafaring life. Formerly, such a thing as feeding common sailors with fresh meat on a long voyage was never dreamt of. Only the officers were thus indulged, and even then, only at the trouble and expense of taking live animals on board. Thanks to the discovery of canister-preserved meats, they now enter into the stores of all well-appointed ships. There are circumstances which leave a mariner no option between canister-preserved meat and salt junk, or animals of the chase. Take, for instance, a ship going to the Arctic or Antarctic regions, there to remain for some three or four years. To take live animals for so long a time would be impossible, or, if taken, the climate would kill them. Canister-preserved provisions afford an easy resource; accordingly, they are much sought on these occasions.

Canister provisions have impressed their first

notions of a civilized cuisine on certain rough fellows, whose previous gustatory enjoyment never mounted above whale-blubber and raw flesh—I mean the arctic bears. On one occasion, at least, these animals have discovered, broken open, and eaten stores of canister provisions, deposited in a heap on the ice of a conspicuous bay, in the hope that wandering human arctic explorers might find them. Bruin and his family seem to have approved of the cuisine, if one may presume to found an opinion on the following occurrence:—Some time after the event last mentioned, letters were inclosed in strong cylinders, not of tin plate, but copper, for greater safety, and deposited also in a conspicuous place. Though made of copper, and very strong, Bruin, happening to pass that way, managed to open the canisters nevertheless, destroying the letters. That Bruin was filled with literary curiosity to find out the secrets of civilized men down south, is an hypothesis so wild that I hesitate to advance it. No; Bruin must have set himself to the burglarious task in the hope of finding a nice little dip of soup and bouille, or a tender wing of chicken. *Apropos* of chickens. I do not know anything within the whole competence of canister cookery more satisfactory in every way than these. They are not inferior to the soups, and that is bestowing upon them a high degree of commendation. Not the least merit of canister provisions, under certain circumstances, is this—the warming up may be accomplished in the case itself. The pedestrian will understand the full bearings of the facility in question.

But perhaps the most important aspect under which the process admits of contemplation is in relation to the facilities it affords of cooking viands of certain kinds, where they exist profusely and are very cheap, and transporting them, when preserved, to other regions, no matter how remote. Under this aspect the process has not received the attention which it merits. The public are too much in the habit of considering it a mere expensive luxury, whereas, in point of fact, it may be made the means of cheapening many of the necessities, to say nothing of the luxuries, of life. In many parts of South America oxen are, or rather were, of no value, except for their skins, horns, and tallow. Rio Janeiro is a case in point. There exists in that locality more than one establishment, if we mistake not, for hermetically sealing up the superabundance of beef produced under the stimulus of the teeming profusion of that clime, yet thoroughly useless to the inhabitants before the method of preserving meat in tin canisters was devised and brought to bear upon it. Upwards of ten thousand oxen, I am credibly informed, are rendered annually available in the above district alone, by means of tin canisters. In certain districts, on either side of the Danube, cattle, though not valueless to the butcher, as in the South American regions we have indicated, are nevertheless extraordinarily cheap. Manufactories for preserving beef in canisters have been established in the above and other similar places, with prospective advantages to society which we can hardly yet estimate as its merits and its capabilities deserve.

Even at home, the tin-canister process has advantages which would be little suspected on a first



glimpse at the circumstances of the case. Sometimes there comes a glut of the meat market at a particular season, when to retain is to spoil. The canister-food preserver then steps in, and purchases almost on his own terms. The operation which he performs is not expensive, and the materials he employs count for a mere trifle in the final cost of the article. His whole establishment is set busily to work, and, in the course of a few hours, whole waggon-loads of meat are brought into a wholesome state of food, defying alike the ravages of time and the elements.

Some years ago a celebrated London cook and confectioner thought it would be a good speculation to establish a manufactory of turtle soup in Honduras, a native place of the turtle. The establishment answered according to his best expectations. Much of the turtle soup supplied to the turtle-eating inhabitants of these isles at this time, was actually made at Honduras—it may be, years ago. A few such discoveries as canister-cooking, rendering the superfluities of one land available to others, should, if appearances be not deceiving, do more to unite men in one common brotherhood, than all the treaties which were ever devised by statesmen or signed by kings.

## MANCHESTER ART TREASURES.

### FOURTH PAPER.—BRITISH ART.

It is in the northern aisle, in the saloons, and their vestibules, running parallel with the nave to the right of the entrance, that the visitor should commence his survey of the works of British artists. The first thing which will strike him is the fact that art in this country, as far as it is worthy of the name, is of very recent birth. In truth, it is hardly worth any man's while, in searching for the rise of true art amongst us, to go much farther back than the time of Hogarth, whose first picture of any note was engraved and published about the year 1725. There were painters who could amuse themselves by deriding Hogarth's uncompromising truthfulness, which they took for coarseness, when he first stepped into the arena; but their names are not worth recalling, and their works, for the greater part, have fallen into deserved neglect. But Hogarth must not be regarded as the founder of the British school, which perhaps might have escaped some of its early mishaps, if his example of painstaking, conscientious, honest working, had been allowed to exercise more influence upon his successors. Among the finest of his pictures in this gallery are, the Southwark Fair, the March of the Guards to Finchley, the portrait of Captain Coram, founder of the Foundling Hospital, and the Niobe. Not until comparatively late in his career did Hogarth win reputation as a painter; his countrymen were no judges of a painter's merit, and he lived by the sale of his prints, which he engraved with his own hand—parting with the original pictures, which would now fetch their hundreds a-piece, for merely nominal sums. But he lived to see his merit acknowledged, and before he died received for a single portrait the largest sum that had been ever paid in this country for such a work. It would be superfluous here to dilate upon

the merits of Hogarth's performances, which are so well and widely known among all classes. Let the visitor con these pictures carefully, and learn how vigorously and fearlessly the bold engraver handled the brush.

But, as already hinted, the English school did not take its tone from Hogarth. Reynolds and Gainsborough, who came a little later, may be said first to have given character to the arts of their country. Reynolds, though in no respect equal to Hogarth as a draughtsman, was far his superior in taste, in the appreciation of art's highest qualities, and in power of contrast, and especially in his mastery of the mystery of colour. It is lamentable that at the present day we can hardly form an idea of what Reynolds's colour really was, so much has it faded and perished through his ignorance of the simplest elements of chemistry, and his paltry and shabby economy in the use of cheap pigments. But for such pictures as Nelly Brien, and the Strawberry Girl, and one or two others, in which the pure greys and vividly delicate carnations are yet appreciable, we should be left to guess the charm which made Sir Joshua's pictures, during his life, the marvel of rival painters. In Gainsborough it was that he found the most formidable of these rivals. The Sudbury artist, as Reynolds must have felt, was his equal in taste and execution, and his superior in genius, for he was a more many-sided man, and failed in nothing that he undertook; but he was inferior in education, not only in relation to his art, but in everything else. An interesting memorial of the rivalry between these two great men is the picture of the Blue Boy, which fills the post of honour at the end of the aisle. It was painted by Gainsborough, practically to disprove a dogma of Reynolds's relative to the asserted destructive effect of the predominance of blue in a picture. The success was complete—the picture being, in spite of its intense blueness, perhaps the very finest portrait of which the British school can boast.

Had Gainsborough followed the bent of his mind, he would have painted little else than landscapes and rustic figures; but his landscapes stood in the same relation to his portraits as Hogarth's paintings did to his engravings—they would not sell for a remunerating price; and it is marvellous that, under such discouragements, he painted so many as he did. How he painted them—what grand and effective transcripts from nature he made of them—the visitor can here see for himself.

Another great landscape-painter, his cotemporary, was marked out for poverty and misfortune. Richard Wilson, sometimes called the English Claude, though he painted in a broad massive way, the reverse of Claude's manner, lived in utter penury, starving in neglect, and pawning for the price of bread and cheese, or a pot of beer, those works for which collectors will now bid hundreds. He would have died in the workhouse, but for a timely legacy left him by a brother, and which saved him from that sad fate.

With some few exceptions, originating with foreigners settled in London, the productions of artists during the close of the last, and the beginning of the present century, bear the impress, more or less, of Reynolds in portrait, and Gainsborough and Wilson in landscape. That Irish

enthusiast, Barry, struck out in a new direction, and endeavoured to force upon the public a relish for classical forms, and not very intelligible mythologies. He wasted his life in this vain attempt, dying in 1806, after its utter and signal failure. An enthusiast of a more fortunate kind was the eccentric Fuseli, the friend and critic of the poet Cowper. A man of rare, almost insane imagination, a pedant though a scholar, and a model of prudence though an artist, he had the sense to look after his personal interests, and maintain his independence. His pictures, well known by numerous engravings, are one and all marked by extravagance of conception, but are redeemed by their vigour of action, or the suggestiveness of the idea they embody.

It is a disputed question whether Benjamin West, though he rose to dignity and honour himself, rendered any service to the arts in England. His pictures, which in the days of our boyhood were reckoned the *ne plus ultra* of painting, have been gradually falling in the estimation of the best judges, who now discern in them—what is the undeniable fact—that they are devoid of imaginative power, and barely mediocre in technical execution. In reference to such a verdict as this, however, it should be remembered that West worked far away from those masterpieces, the sight of which inspires to excellence, and that he had few rivals to stir him to emulation. It should also be remembered that he enlisted his talents in the cause of religion and morality, and left no stain of vice or sensuality on his canvas. Further, his pictures are, at least, popular, and have the merit of being intelligible to the uneducated eye.

But our limits forbid us to catalogue the artists of this era, which was richer in promise than performance. Passing up the aisle, we observe a wonderful change in the prevailing tone of colour, as we approach the performances of our own day. There hang the glowing but meretricious and artificial portraits of Lawrence, the spoilt child of fashion. Yonder is the Judgment of Solomon, by poor Haydon, who, notwithstanding all his errors and defects, rendered one service to art at least, in substituting energetic action for lay-figure inanity. And now we are among the magnificent landscapes of Turner, and, without proceeding far, we can perceive the influence of his master mind upon his cotemporaries, and all who came after him. Year by year, as the English school grows older, it grows more bright and vivid in colour, more expansive in grasp, more rich in detail, more choice in subject—less classical, in a word, and more natural.

We pause amidst the triumphs of modern art and living artists, puzzled with the multitudinous attractions about us, and not knowing which way to turn. A brief glance around shows us a hundred old favourites at least, of which we had made mental memoranda during the last twenty years. Here they are all assembled again after a parting which we had regretted as final, and we can renew our old acquaintance once more. There is Mac-lise's banquet scene in Macbeth, with the shadowy ghost of Banquo in the chair, and the horror-stricken murderer frenzied and aghast. There is the shagreen spectacle scene from the Vicar of Wakefield, by the same hand. There are the

large brown sparkling landscapes of Constable, all in one sense alike, because all imbued with the same feeling of freshness, yet all differing, too, under varied phases of cloud and sky. There are the finest and most elaborate works of Wilkie—the Blind Man's Buff—Distraint for Rent—Guess my Name—the Card Players—the Letter of Introduction, and others; all of them pictures displaying a wondrous power of composition and finish, and appealing irresistibly to every-day feelings and sympathies. There are the surging seas and bounding billows of Stanfield, with the bright white clouds smiling peacefully over the sunken wreck; or the dark seud, ragged, rent, and storm-driven, hurrying and howling over the abandoned ship, the victim of the waves. There are the countless *genre* pictures of Leslie, of Egg, of Goodall, of Faed, of Frith, and a host of others. There are the merry-faced rollicking boys of Webster, inviting us to see-saw or to slide. There is Mulready's Wolf and Lamb—his May Field—his Forgotten Word, and half-a-dozen other of his inimitable pictures, full either of the richest humour or the deepest feeling. There are Landseer's Dogs of St. Bernard—his Diogenes—his Catspaw—his Shepherd's Grave—the Shepherd's Chief Mourner—the Stag at Bay—the Children of the Mist—pictures which to see, if you have not seen them, is an era in a man's life not readily to be forgotten. There are Müller's wonderful works, embracing almost every walk of art, and excelling in all, reminding us how much we lost by his untimely and early death. There are the living cattle of Cooper, the fresh, green, fragrance-breathing landscapes of the two Linnels, of Creswick, of Lee, of Bright and their worthy rivals. There is Lance's fruit and still-life. There are Martin's wild imaginations and Danby's terrible effects; and there are sun-lighted coast scenes from the days of Bonington and Collins, down to Duncan and Cooke. But what are we talking about? Are there not six hundred paintings here, all of the first excellence in their way; and how can we hope to particularize the lot?

Looking to the suffrages of the crowd, who at this moment number some eleven thousand throughout the building, we find the largest clusters gathered round such pictures as either have an historical interest which they can understand, or which, being landscapes or sea views, appeal powerfully to their love of nature. Among the former class of paintings, the most attractive is undoubtedly Mr. Ward's picture of Charlotte Corday going to execution. The story in this painting is told with such cold-blooded fateful earnestness, that every circumstance of the coming event seizes the spectator with the first glance. The undaunted maiden, superior to all the terrors of her situation, walks calmly and thoughtfully to her doom, with no look either of womanly fear or heroic defiance on her face. There is astounding power in this steadfast expression; and while the spectator feels it himself, he sees it reflected also in the phlegmatic Robespierre, in the burly Danton, and the official myrmidons of that butchery. The scene is wonderfully real, and calls forth from the abstracted observers many an ejaculation of pity, of indignation, and of admiration of the erring but determined girl.

Another picture, which is indubitably a remarkable favourite with the indiscriminating public, is a production of Copley's, which stands over the stairs leading to the gallery. It represents the escape of a youth who is swimming from a monster not to be found in nature, but supposed to be a shark; the creature is opening his mouth like a serrated trap-door, and it is not easy to see how the boy is to escape unless the monster relents, which he does not seem likely to do; while the crowd look on in evident expectation of seeing the victim swallowed. But if the picture gives no hope of escape, we are relieved from our apprehensions by a humane and considerate inscription, which tells us that the lad got off scot-free, lived to be a man and make a fortune, and had the picture painted to commemorate the event—all which it is consolatory, after such an assault upon one's sympathies, to be made acquainted with. It is but fair to state that, with the exception of the shark, which is like nothing in *rebus naturalibus*, the picture is admirably painted.

The criticism of the populace on works of art is not in general supposed to be of very great value. In one respect it is not, but in another we are inclined to think it is of the highest value. Next to the opinion of a man who really understands art, we, for our part, should prefer that of one who neither knew, nor pretended to know, anything about it. Such opinions we were fortunate enough to get in the Manchester Exhibition from some of the Lancashire factory hands, and we can say this much for them, namely, that they manifested a ready acquaintance with the phenomena of nature, and a keen relish of their successful transfer to canvas. One thoughtful-looking workman, who had bent long over the Ringwood picture of Patrick Nasmyth, asked us if Nasmyth was not the first of English landscape painters.

"Not in repute—but perhaps you are right," we said; "he is the first in faithfulness."

"I've been looking at that picture," he returned, "till I thought I was looking out o' window."

There was a criticism for you! what could an artist desire more?

"Did Nasmyth die a rich man?" the stranger asked.

"No; miserably poor, I am afraid, judging from the fact that he sold his pictures for paltry sums during his life, chiefly to the dealers, who made a harvest of him."

"There is a picture hereabout, I should like to show you, if you wouldn't mind."

He led the way to an Autumn Landscape, by the younger Linnel.

"There!" said he, "that's looking into a wood at sun-down."

The praise implied was thoroughly deserved; the picture is in all respects excellent.

Such is the popular critic. He can see nature's beauty in the fields or on the canvas of the artist. The grand moral lesson idealised by poet and painter too, he cannot see—it's "not natural" to him. Would it not be worth the painter's while to consult the popular critic more than he does? Or does he think that men of this simple way of thinking and judging are not the men to pay a round sum for a picture? Perhaps Manchester could put in a word on that matter if it chose.

## THE GOSPEL ECHO.

FOUND in a pew in a church in Scotland, written in a female hand, and supposed to be suggested by observing an echo.

True faith producing love to God in man,  
Say, Echo, is not this the gospel plan?  
Echo—The gospel plan!

Must I my faith in Jesus constant show,  
By doing good to all, both friend and foe?  
Echo—Both friend and foe!

When men conspire to hate and treat me ill,  
Must I return them good, and love them still?  
Echo—Love them still!

If they my failings causelessly reveal,  
Must I their faults as carefully conceal?  
Echo—As carefully conceal!

But if my name and character they tear,  
And cruel malice too, too plain appear;  
And when I sorrow and affliction know,  
They smile, and add unto my cup of woe;  
Say, Echo, say, in such peculiar case,  
Must I continue still to love and bless?  
Echo—Still love and bless!

Why, Echo, how is this? Thou'rt sure a dove;  
Thy voice will leave me nothing else but love!  
Echo—Nothing else but love!

Amen, with all my heart, then be it so;  
And now to practice I'll directly go.  
Echo—Directly go!

This path be mine, and let who will reject,  
My gracious God me surely will protect!  
Echo—Surely will protect!

Henceforth on him I'll cast my every care,  
And friends and foes embrace them all in prayer!  
Echo—Embrace them all in prayer.

## ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER.

It is a considerable encouragement unto the duty of prayer, that we cannot come to God therein too oft. We cannot (to speak so) fash him; nay, the oftener we come, the welcomer will he make us, for he calleth us to "pray evermore," or "without ceasing." He would have us always in a praying frame, standing and begging at his door, and at his door only. Is not this a great encouragement, that how much soever he hath granted us to-day, we will not fare the worse if we go again to-morrow?—nay, every hour he will make us welcome. He will take twenty suits off our hand in one hour. Oh! who would not then take pleasure in prayer? We may weary men, and trouble the best of our friends too oft, and be a burden unto them; and the oftener a poor beggar cometh to one man's door, he is not the better served, but rather the worse. But God's beggars have a happy life; they will never get that answer from him: "You were answered lately, and you must not be answered always;" but the contrary. He will say unto them, "Got ye your alms lately, and are you come again for a new alms? Well, you shall not be said nay; the oftener you come to me, the welcomer shall you be."—*John Brown, of Wamphray.*

EARTHLY occupations may engage, but must not engross our thought; they may have a share in our hearts, but let us not forget that our well-being through eternity demands that it should be a subordinate share only.—*Haggit.*

### Varieties.

**POST-OFFICE STATISTICS.**—The following particulars respecting the Post-office department of the country, are gleaned from the Postmaster's Report for 1856. Last year the number of post-offices in the United Kingdom was increased by 368, making the whole present number 10,866. During the last year 52 additional towns were provided with day-mails to or from the metropolis. Exclusive of conveyance by steam-vessels and boats, and not counting the walks of letter-carriers or rural messengers, or the carriage of the mails from post-offices to railway stations, the whole distance over which mails are now conveyed within the United Kingdom is upwards of 61,000 miles per day, being about 2600 miles more than at the end of 1855. This increase is principally in railway conveyance; but it will be seen that more than half the duty is still performed by coaches and mail-carts. With regard to the mails conveyed by railway, the average number of miles travelled over by them each week-day has been 22,285 in England, 2766 miles in Ireland, and 3641 miles in Scotland—total, 28,692 in the United Kingdom, at an average cost per mile of 9½d. With regard to mails conveyed by coaches, omnibuses, mail-carts, etc., the number of miles daily travelled has been in England, 19,298, in Ireland, 8528, and in Scotland, 4885—total in the United Kingdom, 32,711 miles, at an average cost of 10½d. per mile. The number of letters delivered in England during the year—estimated from the number actually delivered in one week of every month—was 388,000,000, being about 20 to each person; in Ireland, 42,000,000, about 17 to each person; in Scotland, 48,000,000, about 16 to each person—total, 478,000,000, about 17 to each person. (In London the proportion is as high as about 40 letters to each person.) As compared with the previous year, this number shows an increase of upwards of 22,000,000; and, as compared with the year previous to the introduction of the penny postage (1839), an increase (omitting franks) of 402,000,000, or more than six-fold. Of the whole number of letters, nearly a quarter are delivered in London and the suburban districts; and, counting those also which are despatched, nearly half the letters pass through the London office. The number of newspapers of all kinds which passed through the Post-office last year is estimated at 71,000,000, about three-quarters of which bore the impressed or newspaper stamp, the others having been franked by postage stamps. The number of letters returned to the writers last year, owing to the failure of the attempts to deliver them, was nearly the same as in the previous year—viz., about 2,400,000, or 1 in 200 of the whole number of letters posted. Owing to the same cause 550,000 newspapers were undelivered, being about 1 in 129 of the whole number. The number of book-packets posted last year, exclusive of newspapers, is estimated at nearly 3,000,000. The money-order offices now number 2095. The amount sent by such orders was in the year 1856, for England and Wales, £10,099,366; for Ireland, £806,942; for Scotland, £899,253—total, £11,805,561. The fact of this enormous amount being sent in sums not less than 40s.—the total number of orders being more than 6,000,000—is a proof how universally the trading and labouring classes profit by the system. In England and Wales the proportion was 1 order to every 4 of the population; in Scotland, 1 to 6; and in Ireland, 1 to 13. Ireland, however, is setting on, since the increase per cent. on the year is 7, while England's is only 7½, and Scotland's is as low as 5½. The money-order offices now bring in a fair sum to the departmental exchequer. For the years 1847-8 there was a loss, and 1849 only showed a profit of £322; but the case is widely different now. The profit for the year 1856 was not less than £22,674, being an increase of £2423 on the preceding twelvemonth. The extension of the system to Constantinople, Scutari, and Balaklava, was attended with signal success, "more than £71,000 having been sent home by the soldiers and seamen—£35,000 by the army works corps." The remittances from Algiers during the past year amounted to more than £22,000, the average amount of each being only £1 1s. 4d.

"A SYRIAN AFRAID OF AN EGYPTIAN!"—About eight o'clock we set out for the Pyramids, having as our drago-

man a most obliging Syrian, Habeed by name, from Beyrout. For some distance we rode through an avenue of lubbuk trees. About half a mile from the city we passed a palace of the pasha's, at the gate of which some dozen of his white-robed soldiers were lounging. I happened to be walking on before, and my donkey followed at some distance. On a sudden I heard a shrill cry, and, turning round, saw one of these soldiers thrashing my donkey-boy, as if he would have beaten him to pieces. Immediately I interfered so far as I could; but not knowing how far the boy might be the cause of the mischief, I was not very energetic, especially as I could not understand the vociferations of the crowd or the explanations of the boy, who, half in Arabic, half in English, was uttering his complaint. Before I could make out the case, the soldier had mounted my donkey, and was riding off. Up came Habeed. In a minute the boy explained the matter, and off went the Syrian at full speed. He soon overtook the soldier and laid hold of the animal. The man of war resisted, vociferated, and laid his hand on his sword. We soon came up and gathered round the combatants. Who was to yield? Not the soldier, we thought, well armed as he was, and almost within hail of his comrades. Habeed, however, was a man most determined in will and powerful in body. Not an inch would he allow the fellow to move. Off he must come from the seat he had usurped, or, if he would not, he must be dragged or driven off. He got calmer—looked at us and saw we were Englishmen—looked at Habeed and saw he was determined; so there seemed nothing for it but to yield, which he did at last, dismounting in sullenness, and leaving me in possession of my charger. The donkey-boy was overjoyed, crying out in his own way to us, "Bad soldier—bad soldier." Habeed was proud of his victory, and rode on at our head in triumph. We asked him if he was not afraid that the soldier would draw his sword. "What," said he, "a Syrian afraid of an Egyptian!" And, flourishing his stick, intimated that his wooden sword would have proved quite a match for the soldier's steel one. I was glad that I had got back my donkey in peace, for had it been carried off, I should not have known what to do, as the day was hot, and the way long, and walking almost impracticable. The incident, however, showed us the oppression which these soldiers exercise over all whom they can safely rob, or injure, or insult.—*Bonar's "Desert of Sinai."*

**THE WISE FOOL.**—In the same individual we often see the greatest wisdom and sagacity in regard to the things of time, combined with the most consummate folly respecting the things of eternity. How often does the shrewd, busy, and prosperous merchant, show himself to be in lamentable ignorance of the practical truths of Christianity, and the hidden life of the true believer! He can calculate with unerring precision the profit or loss of a worldly transaction, but he seldom considers what it will cost him to refuse Christ, and turn a deaf ear to the calls of his Spirit. He may attend regularly on public worship, and duly observe the ordinances, but he will find one day that shadow is not substance, and works dead without faith; and when his race is run, and he enters upon the future, the hand of truth must take up his idle pen, and write across the pages of his ledger, journal, and cash-book—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

**SUDDEN DEATHS FROM JOY IN PARIS.**—An individual who gained a prize of 4000*l.* at the recent drawing of shares issued by the City of Paris, for the loan for improvements, was a scavenger. His wife, when she heard of his unlooked-for fortune, fell dead of extreme joy. Her husband was less affected by his luck, and he has bought the stock and goodwill of a perfumer.—There was also lately another strange instance of death from surprise and joy. A poor non-commissioned officer was charged with the duty of reading out a list of promotions in his regiment to his comrades. He had not the least idea that his own name was among the number, and when he came to it he pronounced it mechanically, and then suddenly grew pale and expired.